

Exeter Lamplight (Browne) 1676 - n.n.
T. D. Wm. Wm.



My Reverend Brethren,

AS I doubt not but that you well know, and seriously weigh the Business and End of your High Calling, in reference to that Great Treasure committed to your Care and Charge, the Souls of Men, redeemed with no less Price, than the Precious Blood of the Son of GOD: So I hold it my Duty, frequently to put you in mind, of what you already know, and to exhort you, to put forth your full Strength, and greatest Abilities, with Credit and Comfort, to go through with that Great Work you are put upon. A Work full of *Danger*, (for other Mens Souls can never, by our default, be endangered, without the utmost peril of our own;) and full of *Trouble*, especially in those broken unsettled Times, wherein the Foundations of our Religion are

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shaken, by Superstition on th'one hand, and Prophaneness on th'other. Now the best way to secure our Religion from the Incursions of both, will be by acquainting the People with the Grounds of it, which cannot be done better, than by the Exercise of Catechising; the easiest and most profitable way of Instruction, called by the Apostle, *The Doctrine of the beginning of Christ*, which must be laid before a Man can be led on to perfection.

And therefore in order to the promoting of that Good Work, (according to the Directions given by His Sacred Majesty, and His Royal Predecessors of ever blessed Memory, King JAMES, and King CHARLES the First, for the Edifying of the People in Faith and Godliness) I am to re-inforce and press home upon you the Execution of such Laws and Constitutions, as enjoyn the Life and Exercise of our CHURCH-CATECHISM, and that you spend your Sundays Afternoon-Instructions chiefly, in Explaining of it.

For as he is no Skilful Builder, who is always Erecting High Turrets, and Stately Roofs, and never cares for laying, or looking after the Foundations: So they understand not what belongs to Catechising, who think it too mean a Busines for Afternoon-Sermons, without which all our Sermons will be in a manner lost upon the People, who can never understand the Doctrines delivered in them, unless they understand first the Principles of Christian Religion.

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And as I am sure, that our short Church-Catechism is compounded of all the four Principal Elements of our Christian Religion, The *Creed*, The *Commandments*, The *Lord's Prayer*, and *Doctrine of Sacraments*, (These are like the Foundation of an House, which tho' it make not such a show, yet is of far greater use, than fair Battlements, or high-raised Turrets :) So I am as sure, that besides Children in *Years*, there are every where Children in *Knowledge*, who stand in more need of Catechistical Instructions, than of such Discourses as are welcom to Itching Ears.

~~A~~ think not therefore that your Preaching is restrained, or abridged, when you are injoyed to turn your *Sunday Afternoon-Sermons* into plain Explanations of the first Principles of Christian Knowledge, laid down in the Church-Catechism. The *Manner* of your Preaching is only altered, and that for the better, both in regard of Ministers, and People ; the former may reap more comfort, the latter greater benefit and profit. For the true reason why so few understand Sermons, or profit so little by them, is, because they do not well understand their Catechism.

You cannot but know, how that Jesuits, and Seminary Priests, and other Emisfaries of the Romish Faction, are continually sowing the Tares of Popish Doctrines, and by fly Insinuations endeavouring to beguile unistable Souls ; and the best way to defeat their subtle and malicious Practices, is not, by bitter Invectives, or clamorous Declamations against

the Pope, and the Church of *Rome*, nor by ordinary debating of Controversies in Popular Sermons, but by well grounding of our own People in the plain, fundamental, saving Knowledge of our True Reformed Religion.

Those who profess that Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion in their Church, do in effect tell us, that Knowledge of the Grounds of Religion is the Destruction of Popery. Instruct your People therefore daily in the plain, positive, Fundamental Doctrine of True Religion, and as *Dagon* (without any further Violence offered to him) fell down dashed in pieces before the Ark of God: So the *Dagon* of all Romish Superstition, without any more ado, will fall down broken in pieces before the clear Truth of the Word of G O D.

Doth the vain Superstition of Worshipping Graven, or Painted Images, bewitch any Man? Teach a Child the meaning of the Second Commandment, and he will quickly see, that his Bowing down to them, or Worshipping Stocks, or Stones, is no part of that Religious Service which G D has appointed. Doth the Reverend Opinion which Christians have, of the Blessed Virgin, the Holy Apostles, and of other Saints departed, and now invested with Glory, move many to call upon them in their Prayers? Teach a Child the Lords Prayer, which is the Rule of all our Prayers, and there he will learn that he must call upon his Father which is in Heaven, and not upon his Brethren, which are gone but a little before him thither. Doth the Idolatrous Mass inveigle many as if

if it were the very Heart of Religion, without which Christianity cannot live? Let a Child understand the right Institution of the Lords Supper, and he will be able to see that their Masses are nothing else but an erroneous, monstrous, and most prophane abuse of the Body and Blood of Christ. In a word, no Tares of Romish Errors can easily take rooting in that heart, which hath been well season'd with the Fundamental Doctrines of Catechistical Instructions. This for the Tares of Romish Doctrines.

There is another sort of Tares, which in your Catechising you may weed out, and give a check to their growth, and that is the Erroneous Opinions of those who separate from our Church, and traduce our Government, Liturgy, Rites and Ceremonies, as unsound and opposite to GOD's Word, and therefore keep at a distance from us, and refuse any Communion with us. Now a Separation from erroneous, or wicked Men, in their Errors and Sins, is an Act of Christian Piety: But a Separation from the Body of the Church in Sacraments, and other Sacred Offices, is a Schismatical Error, joyned with Pride and Arrogancy.

The best way to rectifie them, is without bitterness to advise them to consider,

First, Whether they be not very much mistaken in condemning the Government of our Church in it self as unlawful, because some may perhaps, at some times, use it in an unlawful manner; (we justifie no Mans Personal Faults or Extravagancies, but say with *Tertullian*,

tullian, Non Institutio sed exorbitatio bone rei reprobanda est) or in supposing a Confisitory of their own framing, to be the only allowable form of Church-Government, which neither in the Apostles time, nor ever after, until this last Age, was ever established in any one Christian Church, through the World; and where it is, whether it be not subject to the same, or greater Inconveniences than our present established Government.

Secondly, Whether our Church-Liturgy, so much carp'd at, and so narrowly sifted by those who want neither Will, nor Learning, has by any Man hitherto been sufficiently convinced, to contain but any one Clause contradictory to G O D's Word? If it hath not, (as certainly it hath not) we have no reason to grow out of love with it, or to prefer any new-tangled Fancies of Innovation before it.

Thirdly, Whether in this our Church of *England*, any Members of it are oppressed with any unreasonable Multitude of Ceremonies? Or whether any Rites be thrust upon them contrary to the Rule of GOD's Word? Or whether those that are enjoyned, are enjoyned as substantial parts of Divine Worship, or only as indifferent Ceremonies and Circumstances attending upon Religious Service, prescribed for Comeliness and Uniformity? If our Ceremonies were well cleared from those three Accusations, the Tares of Errors, which Factious Spirits have sown in our Church, may be rooted up by the constant and well-performed Duties of Catechising. All this, and much more good might be done to the Church in

in general, and to the Souls of particular Persons, by informing the Ignorant, confirming the Wavering, and bringing into the way of Truth such as have erred and are deceived.

Were the Youth duly Catechised, (in which there is a Condescension to the meanest Capacities, most familiarly to treat with them) and imbued with the undeniable Grounds, and clear Knowledge of the Orthodox Religion, they could not so easily be carried down the stream of Wickedness, nor moved aside by every wind of Doctrine. The Jesuits would not gain so many Proselytes, nor the Sectaries so many Followers, nor the Atheists such a number of Proficients, who loudly and confidently laugh at GOD and Religion. 'Tis the want of Good Instruction in Youth that lays the Foundation of Atheism and Debauchery in Riper Years.

And therefore the Duty of Catechising being of so great Advantage, and the Neglect of it of so mischievous Consequence, I am the more earnest to make the strongest Impression I can upon You, (*My Brethren*) for a due and vigorous Prosecution of this too-long-neglected Duty, that we may not be found, in such Times as we are now fallen into, to do the Work of the LORD negligently.

GOD Almighty so enlighten your Minds with the Knowledge of his Word, and sanctifie your Hearts with the Power of his Grace, that both by your Teaching, and Living, you may advance the Spiritual Kingdom of CHRIST in your selves and others, that

to both You, and they who are committed to your Charge, may be advanced to his Eternal Kingdom.

This is the Prayer of,

Your Affectionate Friend

and Brother,

Tho: Exon.

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